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SERMON

Preach'd in the
Chapel at Coleford,
In the Parish of *Newland,*
In the County of *Gloucester,*
Before the Society for
Reformation of Manners.

Publish'd at their Request.

By William Harrison
of Stanton.

L O N D O N,

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Exod. XXXII. Ver. 26.

Then Moses stood in the Gate of the Camp, and said, Who is on God's Side? let him come unto me. And all the Sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

I Do not find one Instance Registered in the Book of God, of any Person among the Tribes of *Israel*, that, during the Four Hundred and Thirty Years which they sojourned in the *Land of Egypt*, was ever prevailed with by *Love*, or *Fear*, or any other more Powerful *Attractive*, to depart from the Obedience of their God. It was

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sure as great a Miracle of *Mercy*, to
 preserve them free from Infection
 there, as it was afterwards of *Power*,
 to rescue them thence. But when
 God by his *mighty Hand and stretched-*
cut Arm, had brought them out of
 the *House of Bondage*, and had born
 them thence, as it were, *upon Eagles*
Wings, and compleated that Deli-
 verance, by the Overthrow of the
Egyptians in the Red-Sea, every little
 disgust gave Colour to their Inclina-
 tions, not only of longing after the
Flesh-Pots of Egypt, when they had
Manna for their Food, and Quails
for their Lust, but of relapsing to
 the Idolatry of *Egypt* too, when all
 other Manifestations of the true
 God, except immediate Intuition,
 were every Day obvious unto them.
 The greatest Instance of which Mis-
 carriage, you may read in this
 Chapter; the Substance whereof is
 this: While *Moses* was in the Mount
 with God receiving the *Tables of the*
Law, the People took Occasion by
 his

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his Absence to put *Aaron* upon making the *Golden Calf*, which so far provoked the Lord to Jealousie, that *Moses* his Intercession was scarce sufficient to atone the Divine Displeasure. But tho' the Lord at last repented of the Evil that he had conceived against them; yet *Moses*, seeing the Sin and Folly of the People, his Anger waxed hot, and he cast the Tables of the Law out of his Hands, and brake them beneath the Mount, and he took the *Calf* and burnt it in the Fire, and ground it to Powder, and caused the Children of *Israel* to drink of it; and when *Aaron* had reported the Occasion, *Moses* stood in the Gate of the Camp and said, *Who is on God's Side? let him come unto me. And all the Sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.*

From which Words (for Method sake) I shall lay down these Particulars.

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- I. The Person that here speaks.
- II. The Subject matter of his Speech.
- III. The manner of speaking.
- IV. The Effect and Success of it.
- And,
- V. I shall offer something by way of Improvement.

I. *The Person that here speaks*, that is, *Moses*. And if any of you enquire why he, from the *Gate of the Camp* intermeddled with the Affairs of the *Congregation*; or why the secular Power should be concerned in directing Matters of Religion, since *Aaron* and his Sons were particularly set apart for the Management of that Province, the Solution is easie, that *Moses* was by special Commission intrusted chiefly with both *Civil* and *Ecclesiastical* Affairs, and *Aaron* acted only in Subordination to him; and if you will consult *Numb. 10. 1, 2.* you will find a full Proof of his Investiture and Right.

2. This

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2. This Power was not a bare Personal Privilege, and no President to be made of it, but it was to last for ever: and there is great reason, that seeing the Use shall never cease, the Power should never determine: and upon this Account it descends upon such as hold *Moses* his Place; and he was Prince of the People, by Virtue of which Power he was *Custos utriusq; Tabulæ*, both Tables of the Law were under his Inspection, and he had Power to punish the Omission of *our Duty to God*, as well as of *our Duty to our Neighbour*. Now *St. Paul* saith, *that those things which were written aforetime, were written for our Learning*: then it follows,

3. That the Chief *Magistrate* succeeds *Moses* in Right, in Power, and in Duty. In Right, as being intrusted by God, whose Minister he is. In Power, to suppress *Irreligion* and *Idolatry*, as well as those

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Practices which disturb his Subjects Peace, or inroach upon the Privileges of his own *Crown and Dignity*. And then in Duty, as not to bear the Sword in Vain, but for *the Punishment of Evil-Doers, and for the Praise of them that do well.*

Now as *Moses* is a Standard to such Persons, so from his Example they may justify their Practice in beating down the strong holds of Sin, in enquiring after the Affairs of the Church, as well as the Common-Wealth, and (as I said) exacting our Duty to God as well as our Neighbour. And this,

4. Will be done with good effect, if we have a *Moses*, a *David*, or *Josiah* to bear rule over us. But if he be either a *Nimrod*, an Oppressor of his People, *Rehoboam*, a Fool, or *Jeroboam*, a Man of no Religion, who will Summon us to engage on God's side; or *to rise up with him against the Evil-doers*; it is rather
to

to be feared, that Violence and Impiety will be practised by their Countenance, and Vice by their Impunity will be rather encouraged than reformed. This is no mere Speculative Notion, but has been fatally experimented.

When *David* was King over *Israel*, in his First Speech to the States of his *Realm*, and as I may say, before his First Parliament, he complains, that the *Ark* was not sought to in the Days of *Saul*: that is, that Religion went to wrack, and was not at all lookt after, 1 *Chr.* 13. 3. And to make Amendment for this Miscarriage, he consecrates the Beginning of his own Government and Reign with an *Act de arcâ reducenda*, for bringing back the *Ark*, that it should still remain at *Obed-Edom's*, and Religion be confined to a few private Families, which was of such Publick and Universal Concern and Advantage, seemed in *David's* Thoughts

Thoughts a general Injury. When a Prince takes Care of Religion, his Piety will Influence his People, and his Example command their Imitation. When there is *no King in Israel*, every one will do that which is right in his own Eyes: and when there is an evil King, few will do that which is right in the Eyes of God.

To bring this matter nearer home; the former part of it was verified among us in the late times of our Lawless and confused *Anarchy*, when Truth was driven to the dark, and Swarms of Heresies (under which the Land still groans) did plant themselves among us, and the latter was demonstrated in the two succeeding Governments, wherein (besides our Ingratitude and Forgetfulness of God, not to be past over without a due Reproof) our Scandalous Inclinations to every sort of *Immorality*, too freely discovered them-

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themselves : So that when it pleased God to send Our Late Gracious *Sovereign* to Reign over us, and to rescue our Religion, our Laws, and Liberties, that had been violently wrested out of our Hands, his hardest Task was to rescue us from our selves, and to deliver us from the Power of our Corruptions, and Sins, which were the very Snares that betrayed us into our former Dangers. And for this end were his several Letters sent to the *Arch-Bishops*, and *Bishops*, and *Justices* of the *Peace*, and followed by his repeated *Proclamations* dispers'd and publisht in all the Corners of the Land, to let us know his earnest Desires for a *National Reformation* : and under his auspicious Influence did the several *Religious Societies* undertake this Task, as will plainly appear by a Retrospection to their Rise and Progress ; by which you may see, that *Moses* or the Chief Magistrate is not altogether dis-interested in Matters of Religion ;

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Religion ; (but especially when we have a Virutous Prince necessary to its Propagation.) And this is my First Particular : *The Person that speaks.*

II. *The Subject Matter of his Speech, Who is on God's Side ? let him come unto me.* It's a considerable Advantage to Religion, to have Persons in Power to patronize and defend it. For then its Professors may go in Peace ; no Fear nor Danger lies before them ; nay, further, great Men usually influence their Dependants according to their own Inclinations. As on the one side, *Heresie* and *Idolatry* grew up under *Constantius* and *Julian* ; so on the other side, an *Orthodox* and *Religious* People will usually be found where a *Constantine* or *Theodosius* governs. Now there's a great deal of difference between a Prince that encourageth to espouse the Cause of God, and that is always foremost in his Service, and another that is not only
remiss

remits himself, but punisheth all others that cast their Eyes towards his Holy Temple. *Pharphaoh* will ask the Question, *Who is the Lord, that I should serve him?* But let *Moses* be called to enter upon his Work, he may perhaps question his own Sufficiency, or desire to be further instructed, that he may be able to do it with Effect, but he never shews an *Unwillingness to the Undertaking*. This may be proved in the Instance before us: The People had sinn'd in making and worshipping the *Molten Calf*; *Moses* does not stay until others desire a Redress of the Evil, but voluntarily sets about it himself.

Now all things that refer to our siding with God, (*Idolatry* being omitted, which I hope is not to be reckoned among our *National Sins*) may be reduced to these Two General Heads.

I. *The*

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1. *The Suppressing of Sin; which Sin is the Work of the Devil.*

2. *The Encouraging of Virtue; which in a sort makes us Partakers of the Divine Nature.*

1. *The Suppressing of Sin.* And here I will not stay to draw it in its proper Lineaments and Colours, to shew the odious Nature of it, or how it blasted the Perfections of our innocent and happy Condition at first; but only make a short Essay upon these two things.

1. *How unserviceable it is to our selves.*

2. *How Injurious it is to God.*

1. To us, in respect of the unprofitableness, which is a considerable Discouragement to the Practice of it. *What Fruit had you in it &*
says

says the Apostle; certainly none at all, unless such as Men who sow the Wind, and reap the Whirlwind: For they that sow to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption: Therefore, says the Wise-Man, *the Wicked worketh a deceitful Work*, Prov. 11. 18. it doth not answer his own Expectation, the next thing that attends it is shame. What Solomon says of the Adulterer, is true of many other Sinners besides. *A Wound and a Dishonour shall he get, and his Reproach shall not be wiped away*, Prov. 6. 33. Farther yet, our sinful Pleasures are generally of short Continuance. There are some Sins that naturally shorten our Lives, and often break our Glass before the Sands are half run out; as *Drunkenness, Adultery*, and such disorderly Practices: and all Sins breed a Worm in our Consciences, which (if it destroy not our Gourd wherein we are so much delighted) will make our abiding uneasy under the Shadow

dow of it. *Solomon says, the Wicked flyeth when no Man pursueth; no Man pursueth from without, but there is that pursueth from within; I mean the Sting and Guilt of an Evil Conscience, which is to wicked Men a Hell upon Earth. But lastly, lest they should pretend to put their Temporary Pleasures in the Scale against their Temporary Punishments, our Saviour tells them, Their Worm dieth not, and their Fire is not quenched. Tho' the end of these things is Death, yet it is such Death, as by Sin entered into the World: and therefore, let not these Men grow incorrigible because the Sentence is not immediately executed; and by abusing God's merciful Reprieve, make themselves incapable of a Pardon: nor yet presume to plead, that their present Impunity is the Evidence of God's Approbation; for when God leaves Men to themselves, and the Sting of their own Lusts, it's not in Mercy, but in Judgment*
and

and Wrath : and when Men pretend to be their own Masters, and do what they will without Controul, it is in the Extremity of Anger that God suffers them. But then,

2. Our Sins against God, I shall reduce to these Particulars.

*Ingratitude, Apostacy, Contempt;
Stupidity, Security, and Incon-*
grigibleness.

i. *Ingratitude.* God asks one Question of the Jews himself, *Have I been a barren Wilderness, or a Land of Darknes unto you ?* Jer. 2. 23. No, but far otherwise. Why then did they occasion him to complain, that they had caused him to serve with their Sins, and wearied him with their Iniquities ? Again, *Moses* asks them another Question. *Do you thus requite the Lord ? O ye foolish People and unwise ! the Mercies they received, the Means they*
lived

lived under, will for ever justify God's Expectation from them ; but the manner of their living under such Dispensations must needs leave them open and defenceless, not only to the upbraiding of their own Consciences, but also of God himself.

2. *Apostacy.* It's unpardonable in the blindest Pagans to Worship the Work of their own Hands. For in the Works of Creation, tho' God has not left himself without a Witness, yet he hath left us without Excuse. But after all, this very Charge is brought against God's own People, the Jews, that *they changed the Glory of the invisible God into the Image of a Calf that eateth Hay*, Psal. 106. 20. But besides, the matter extends farther. Every sinful Lust, every covetous Desire that is lodged in our Breast, is entertained as God's Rival, and doth as directly estrange our Hearts from him, as the Material Idol

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to which a Man prostrates himself.

3. *Contempt.* The Jews had received from God *Precept upon Precept, and Line upon Line*, Isa. 28. 10. God had courted and intreated them not to forsake their own Mercies, but they despise the Riches of his Patience and Forbearance. They contemn him in his Laws, and say, *God will not require it*, Psal. 10. 13. They contemn him in his Power, and say, *We will not have this Man reign over us*, Luk. 19. 14. They contemn him in his Providence, and neither regard the Work of the Lord, nor the Operations of his Hands, Psal. 28. 5. Yea, and they contemn him in his most tender Mercies, *Let Favour be shewed to the Wicked, yet will he not learn Righteousness*, Isa. 26. 10.

4. *Stupidity and Security.* Because God lets men alone in sinning,

and suffers them to take their Pleasure therein, therefore Men think that God will let them alone in punishing, and that they may take their Course; but he will at last set all their *Misdeeds in order before them*, even as they committed them; and their *secret Sins in the Light of his Countenance*. 'Tis recorded of the Church of *Laodicea*, that she thought her self rich and increased with Goods, and that she had need of nothing; yet at the same time, she was indeed *poor and miserable, blind and naked*, Rev. 3. 18, 19.

5. *Incorrigibleness*. When the hand of God was up against them, they regarded it not: according to the Prophet's Complaint, *Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have not received Correction: they have made their Faces harder than a Rock, they have refused to return*, Jer. 9. 3. Now, what *Moses* can see the Cause of

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of God sinking, and not summon all *well-disposed Persons* to engage with him in suppressing its Enemies: and if the same Occasion be given in other Countries, as was formerly in the Land of *Jewry*; or more particularly, if the *Jews Sins* be rise among us, and if we have had two Princes successively that have invited all good Men to the Work of *Reformation*, that so our *Iniquities may not be our Ruine*; Why should we be backward or cowardly? This at least let me desire, that if there be any such that will not go forth against Sin, and beat down its strongholds, yet at least they would stand upon their own defence, and not suffer Vice to be still the Aggressor, that it surprize them not by Stratagem, nor get the Dominion over them by Force.

Tho' I could rather wish, that they would lay before them the noble Example of those that have

voluntarily engaged themselves in the Work, and so successfully beat down all Opposition, wrestled with all Difficulties and Dangers, and neither feared the Frowns of the mighty, nor the Scorns and Reproaches of the ungodly, but considered whose Cause they had espoused, and trusted him with the Issue. At first indeed, they found the Conflict great *to strive with the whole Earth.* The Labour most unthankful, *to vex them that dwell therein;* and the Success most Uncomfortable, *to labour in vain, and spend their Strength for nothing :* This was Discouragement enough to the most resolved Persons. Besides, the very degeneracy of the Age did almost stifle their first and feeble Efforts; and they were so over-shadowed with the bold and rampant Vices of the Times, that they could but barely subsist, mortify their own Corruptions, and edify one another in Grace and Godliness. They were
not

not powerful enough to attacque our National Sins, for want of a *Moses* to encourage them, a Prince whose Virtue should influence his People to love and practise the like; by which means the Word of God became like a burning Fire shut up in their Bowels, that could not force its Vent: and while they durst scarce openly make mention of God's Name, they were unwilling to offer his Word to the daily Reproach and Derision of Wicked Men, and so consequently they could not propose to themselves a Plentiful Harvest of their Labours in the Nation's Conversion and Reformation, by turning the Hearts of the Fathers to the Children, or of the disobedient to the Wisdom of the just, and so prevent the Lord's coming to smite the Earth with a Curse.

These Discouragements were improved in the succeeding Reign, and for that reason, there Consultations were more retired and wary, be-

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cause (says Dr. Woodward) the Face of the reformed Religion was clouded, and all private Meetings suspected; and some of those Persons not having dig'd deep enough to have a firm Root in Religion, grew first cool and indifferent, afterwards loose and extravagant, and last of all, notorious Apostates. But the Mis-carriages of some, sharpened the Circumspection of the rest, and made them the more Watchful against the like Temptations.

But when the Lord turned again the Captivity of Zion, when all our Troubles, and Fears, and Jealousies, expired, by the Establishment of Our Late Sovereign *King William of Glorious Memory*, their Hearts were filled with Laughter, and their Tongues with Joy; that they resumed their Work with a new Courage and an incredible Success; for not only all the Quarters and Corners of our own Land, but all the Reformed Churches abroad, congratulated

gratulated their Success, and engaged in the like Design. And all this is visibly owing to the Protection and Patronage of that Prince, that nursing Father of our Church, who was not only the Titular, but Real and Substantial Defender of our Faith and Religion.

And blessed be God, the Work of Reformation is not dead with him, but God has raised us up a Princess to rule over us, whose Example will teach us the Fear of God, and whose Resolutions are unmoveably fixt, to Discountenance and Punish the Workers of Iniquity.

Again, the other thing wherein we can and ought to side with God is, in the Practice of Holiness, and producing the Effects thereof, good Works. A good Life doth of all things best adorn our Profession, but a good Life cannot be without Fruit, I shall therefore speak to both briefly.

I. It's

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I. It's plain from the Apostle, that *without Holiness no Man shall see God*, Heb. 12. 14. nor without it shall any Man please God; for the *Sacrifice of the Wicked is an Abomination to him*, Prov. 21. 27. by leading pure and innocent Lives, we resemble the Perfections of God himself, who is Holy in his Nature, and Holy in all his Actions. Now Holiness is not only a privative, but a positive Duty: not only a ceasing from Sin, but abounding in Good Works. St. Paul tells us, *Godliness has the Promise*. And Solomon, *to him that worketh Righteousness shall be a sure Reward*.

Again, to lead an unreprieveable Life will commend us to God and every Man's Conscience, and keep us much out of the Road of Satan's Temptations; or if they attack us, they will want their Sting, and not be able to hurt us: but then we must beware that we rest not in the
outside

outside, and value the Husk more than the Kernel. For Hypocrisie and Formality will enter like a Canker, and eat out the Sap and Virtue of Religion: and upon these Occasions, God often lets the Devil loose upon such Persons, because they do not walk sincerely before him. The Distinction between a formal Professor and a sound Christian lies under common Observation. The first bears only Leaves that will fall, wither, and come to nothing. But the latter bears Fruit; which is the thing next to be spoken to.

1. The first is the Fruit of Obedience, which every good Man readily prays to God for. *Then are you my Friends indeed, when you do whatsoever I command you,* John 15. 14. But he that shrugs at the Undertaking, or shrinks from it, or thinks the Duty unreasonable, or reserves to himself the time and manner of

Per-

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Performance, doth not at all make himself acceptable to God by such Obedience; therefore as the Rule runs, to obey God *because* he commands; so next, *as* he commands.

2. Obedience without Faith would naturally lead us to rely upon Merits, and leave us destitute of the Means whereby we lay hold on Christ, and of Salvation by him. This therefore is the one thing necessary, and every where recommended to our use. This encourageth us to go on in well doing, and not be weary and faint in our Minds: and this defends us against all Assaults and Temptations of our Adversary the Devil.

In all the Magazine that's provided for our Spiritual Warfare, there's not a more successful Weapon to be met with, whether for Offence or Defence. Then,

3. To

3. To these join Charity. 'Tis the best Character of Faith when it *works by Love.* This is the most extensive Grace, and the longest lasting that any Christian is possess withal. For the former, our Saviour tells us, it is the fulfilling of the Law, the whole Law. Our Duty to God as well as our Neighbour depends upon it. For the latter, *St. Paul* tells us, that among the three principal Graces, Faith, Hope, and Charity, *the greatest of them is Charity.* Faith gives place to Vision: Hope is swallowed up in Fruition: but Charity never ceaseth, but will still be capable of Addition and Improvement, and receives its Perfection, but not its Period, in the World to come.

4. That which must crown all these Graces, is Perseverance. This truly proves whether we have the Form or Power of Godliness, and doth distinguish our real from our counterfeit

counterfeit Graces. A sincere good Man will not be shaken out of his Faith or Obedience by any Hardship or Trial, but resolves with *Job*, *that tho' God should kill him, still to trust in him*: nor be complemented out of his Religion, though with the wholesale Promises of the Devil, being well assured, that *if he hold out unto the Death he shall obtain a Crown of Life.*

This then is that which I have here to lay before you, first, to get a Principle of Religion rivetted in your Hearts; next, that you do not offer Violence, but pay a cheerful Obedience to the Dictates of it; and lastly, that you witness the same by being Exemplary, and *causing your Light to shine before Men, that others may see your good Works, and glorifie your Father which is in Heaven.* And thus I have dispatcht the two great Points, wherein we are to side with God, and take his

Part

Part against all his Enemies. How reasonable is it then that we should comply with his Invitation, and beat down Sin, and live down Sin, and turn many to Righteousness? For that's the true Character of Christian Religion, to disperse and communicate its Blessings, according to *Habakkuk's* Prophecy, *that the Earth may be filled with the Knowledge of the Glory of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea, Hab. 2. 14.* Accordingly the first Propagators of our Faith, spared no Labours, feared no Dangers, but went on with the Work; and the Spirit of God assisting them, they thus overcame the Malice of the *Jews*, the Wisdom of the *Greeks*, and Power of the *Romans*, that neither separately, nor in Conjunction, were they able to hinder the Progress of the Gospel.

But such narrow Soul'd Persons live now in the Dregs of time, that they will contribute nothing towards

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wards the Success of this important Matter, but a few faint Wishes, without the least Endeavours; and some think themselves under no Obligation to attempt the Reformation of others; and some raise an Evil Report against the thing, and traduce the Undertakers.

For the *First* then, let them consider, that Impiety is as directly displeasing to God as Idolatry, if the one be putting up a Competitor to rob him of his Honour and Glory, the other is raising a Rebellion against him, and may in due time be advanced to the same provoking Guilt, if it doth not lead directly to it. For the Apostle intimates, that they who *put away a good Conscience, next make Shipwrack concerning the Faith*; and an evil Man is a credit to no Religion; the best Institution will suffer Reproach by loose Professors, and the Name of God be blasphemed by Aliens. Who then
can

can stand by as unconcerned, when the Question is put, whether the *Israelites God*, or the *Egyptians Calf* shall be adored? or who can pretend to be a Lover of God, and see his Honour laid in the Dust? if *Gebal*, and *Ammon*, and *Amalek* are with many others confederated in Evil, should not we unite in doing Good? Hear how *Deborah* and *Barack* sing, *Curse ye Meroz*, said the *Angel of the Lord*, *Curse ye bitterly the Inhabitants thereof*, because they went not forth to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, *Judg. 5. 23.* And as some are backward and lazy in this general Concern, so others think it not their Duty: which is the

2d. thing. The whole Body of Christendom should be but one Society, as being all Fellow Members, all incorporated under Christ the Head. But he that doth not live up to the Laws of Christianity may

D be

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be united to the Head, but it's no otherwise than a dead Branch to the Tree; he is nothing advantaged by such Union. The Sap and Virtue of the Body doth not disperse and communicate its Benefits to a dead Bough. As in the Body Natural one Member cannot say to another, I have no need of thee: So in the Body Mystical, which is the Church of Christ, one while we need the Instruction, Comfort or Reproof of others, another while they may need the like from us; and therefore we should at all times consult the general Welfare: *For my Brethren and Companions sake, I will now say, Peace be within thee, Psal. 12. 2. 8.* And St. Paul adviseth, to *bear one anothers Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ, Gal. 6. 2.* Christians should always have a Sympathy and Fellow feeling in every Condition, and where this is wanting, I have a violent suspicion, that Man's Religion is not built upon its proper Foundation.

3. There

3. There are some that bring an evil report against the thing, and traduce the Undertakers. This is no new matter, for when *Corah*, *Dathan*, and *Abiram* gathered themselves together against *Moses* and *Aaron*, this was the Charge: You take too much upon you, ye Sons of *Levi*. And our Saviour tells us aforehand what we are to expect; for if they call the Master of the House *Beelzebub*, why may they not as well those of his Household; and who doth not hear the Complaints that are brought against us?

1. That we act violently, and either that's made the Omen of our hasty Dissolution, or else, that it will betray us into many Indiscretions that will at last blast the whole Design.

To which I answer, That the necessity of Affairs admits no other Method, when Arguments will not perswade, when Tenderness

and Pity add to the growth of the Distemper, sharper Medicines must be applied, and some punished, that others may take warning.

2. That we have no Law to countenance such Assemblies, and that therefore we are out of our Sphere, and act without a Warrant.

Answ. We have Laws for punishing the several vices that we pretend to reform; but having no rule by which to steer our Course, our proceedings must be justified if they aim at their proper end, and no Law is violated by our Practice.

3. That we act maliciously, and do it neither out of Zeal for God's Glory, Charity to the Souls of our Brethren, nor a hearty Detestation of Sin, but out of Peakes and Animosities to our Neighbours.

Answ.

Ans. We entered upon this Business without Prejudice to any thing but Sin, which, by God's Assistance, we are still resolved to beat down wheresoever we find it, and are willing, in the Apostles Language, to spend and be spent for your Sakes, tho' the more we love, the less we be loved; and the more we labour to do you good, the more we be respected on for it.

4. That we act partially, and while like *Saul* we suffer Execution to be done upon what's refuse and vile, we spare *Agag* and the fatlings, and either do not, or dare not cause great Persons to be punished.

Ans. I hope no such Temper has hitherto appeared among us: but if at any time we make Distinctions in punishing, in my Judgment, the Circumstance of the Offender should lead to it; viz. that we distinguish between an accidental and

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a designed Sin. 2. Between a young puny Transgressor and an old obdurate Sinner, for the one may be reclaimed by Counsel, when the other will be hardened by it. But a Christian Prudence must manage this.

Lastly, That we act Hypocritically, and while we observe the Mote in our Brother's Eye, neglect the Beam that is in our own.

But against this Charge it's easie to Answer, That they who judge us must needs want Evidence, and therefore should not be so uncharitable. However, this is our Comfort, that there lies an Appeal from their Tribunal to the great Searcher of Hearts, from whom we hope for a more equal Censure. Next we confess, that we have our Failings, our Passions and Infirmities like other Men, and therefore do beseech you, Brethren, pray for us; and if you see us overtaken with a Fault, reprove

prove us Friendly, but let not your precious Balm break our Heads: and if you think not fit to cover us with the Mantle of Charity, endeavour to restore us with the Spirit of Meekness. But to go on:

It has been the Devil's Work in all Ages to obstruct the growth of Religion, and draw Men aside, out of a purposed Malice, that they may be equally miserable with himself: and wicked Men turn first their Ears, and then their Hearts from hearing God's Law, and having gone too far to retreat, at last they will not endure (though at the cost and Pains of another) to be rescued out of the Snares of the Devil.

III. Let us next see what weight lies in the *manner of Speaking*.

1. The Words may be reduced to a Plain Proposition, and then the Interrogative *who*, is as much as *whosoever*.

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2. The Words being put by way of Question, *Who is on God's side?* make it a Question whether any were left that had not worshipt the Calf, and this implies the Universality of the Infection, or otherwise as a Question demands an Answer.

3. The Expression compared with *Moses* his Carriage before remembred, denotes the heinousness of the Sin, and the heinous Nature of Sin in general.

4. The proper means of redressing National Sins, is to unite under *Moses*.

1. If the Question be turned to a Proposition, then it imports thus much, That it is every Man's Business to enter the Lists against Sin, and no Man is any further God's Friend, than he appears the Devil's Enemy. So that this excludes Neutrality in Religion, and arraigns all such as are
Trimmers

Trimmers between Heaven and Hell,
If the Lord be God, serve him; but if
Baal be God, serve him, 1 Kings 18. 21.
And when the like Competition hap-
pens between God and our Sins,
which we will follow, if we cannot
cut off the gangreen'd Hand, or pull
out the lustful Eye, we are not fit
to be Christ's Disciples, we cannot
serve him and *Belial*. Now for all this,
Peoples Hearts were set on Mischief,
they did not consider what Snare
lay in the Image they had made:
I suppose they did not imagine, that
the *Calf* which *Aaron* then made,
was their Deliverer from *Egypt's*
Bondage, but only the Similitude;
and if that was condemned for gross
Idolatry, then who can justify the
like Practice now.

2. The Words being put by way
of Question, seem to suspect the In-
fection might be universal, the Plague
is not more catching, nor Pitch more
defiling than Sin, which when it be-
comes ala-mode, the Multitude like
Beasts

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Beasts follow the Drove of their Foregoers, considering the way, but not the end of their Actions. The Apostacy of this People to Idolatry was somewhat general upon another Occasion, for so *Elijah* complained to God himself, that his People had broken his Covenant, thrown down his Altars, slain his Prophets with the Sword, and, says he, *I only am left, and they seek my Life to take it away,* 1 Kings 19. 16. And tho' God answered him, that he had seven thousand left in *Israel* that had not bowed to *Baal*; yet that is but a small number compared with the contrary Party.

Again, If the Question demands an Answer, then such Persons must be presumed to side with God, who by special Designation and Appointment are entrusted with the Concerns of Religion. And the Sons of *Levi* being consecrated to this Service, it's expected they should lead the
forlorn,

forlorn, and give the first Onset: but the Weapons of our Warfare are not Carnal; and the want of external Force to compel such as will not be perswaded, doth prove the unsuccessfulness of our Undertaking: for tho it belongs to the Preachers of Righteousness, *ex Officio*, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long Suffering and Doctrine; yet this will prevail but little upon such as are not willing to be reformed themselves; therefore here appears,

2. The Usefulness of the Civil Magistrate. We had lately a Prince that, as Generalissimo, engaged in this Warfare, and it may be expected that all Subordinates should chearfully follow such a Leader; whom, tho it hath pleased God to take from us, yet he has taken Care that we may not be losers by the Exchange, and therefore has supplied the Throne with an Heroick Princess, whose forward Zeal for the Reformation

tion of Manners, has already baffled the Expectations of evil Men, and who has solemnly declared against all God's Enemies as her own. And now, methinks it should be reasonable for all such Persons as have received Commissions from either of them, to be so far influenced by such Royal Examples, that Vice may not get Ground by their Cowardice or Unfaithfulness, nor the Honour and Glory of God be trampled under foot by Means of their Negligence. Why should they refuse to sentence those to condign Punishments who are a nuisance to the Government, and a Scandal to the Christian Religion? will not the repeated Commands of Authority awaken them? nor the Obligation of their Oath frighten them into the Discharge of their Office? Who can chose but tremble, when he considers that he stands accountable both for Breach of Trust, and Neglect of Duty, to God, and to God's Vicegerent? But, 3. If

3. If this matter is too heavy to lie only on the Magistrates Hands, they have an Influence upon others, whose Assistance they may command to put the Laws in Execution that have been made against Prophane-ness and Immorality: I mean Church-Wardens and Constables. The Laws Ecclesiastical oblige the one, and the Common Law the other. And it would contribute very much to a National Reformation, if these would faithfully and conscientiously discharge their Duties, though they move in a lower Sphere, and have not Power to pronounce the Sentence of the Law against a Criminal, yet they are Eyes and Hands to the Magistrates, and by Presentments and Informations would certainly be a means to reduce disorderly Persons. It's their Part and Duty to discover and find out the Offender, and then it's the Magistrate's Concern to have him punished.

Lastly,

Lastly, Every Christian, of what Rank or Order soever, has some Capacity or other to do good in this kind: and there lies an indispensable Obligation upon him by the Laws of his Holy Profession to discountenance Sin, which is a Reproach to any People. And why then should any reflect upon the regular Practices of those that endeavour to suppress it, as long as they make the Law their Rule, and doing good the end of their Actions?

And as for us that came in at the *Eleventh Hour*, after so many worthies that *have born the Burden and Heat of the Day*, there is certainly expected from us, for the redeeming our lapsed time, a greater Zeal for God's Glory, and a greater Diligence in his Service: and this let us cheerfully and vigorously perform, and not be weary, or faint in our Minds; nor give up the Cause we have espoused, tho' all the Pow-

ers of Hell were confederated against us. But to return :

3. The Expression compared with *Moses* his Carriage before remembered, denotes the Heinousness of the Sin, and the Heinous Nature of Sin in general. The particular Sin here remembered, which provoked the Displeasure both of God and his Servant *Moses*, was *Idolatry*, and against this God hath always exprest himself concern'd, and hath told the *Jews* plainly by his Prophet *Isaiah*, that his *Glory* he will not give unto another : yea, long before, that he is a *Jealous God*, visiting the Iniquities of the Fathers upon the Children, where a Rival is put up against him. In the next place, the heinous Nature of Sin in general, may be inferr'd from this particular : and if *Moses* direct not the grubbing it up by the Roots, or encourage such zealous Persons as will espouse the Cause of God, Iniquity will abound, to
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the Dishonour of our pure and undefiled Religion, and the hardning of Aliens that otherwise would embrace it.

4. The proper means to redress National Sins, is to unite under *Moses*. The difficulty of the Work seems to require this Concurrence. *Moses* has neither Eyes enough to observe, nor Hands enough to punish every Offence, and therefore according to *Jethro's* Advice, *Exod.* 18. 21, 22. he is to take in Assistance, not only for the determining of Right, but punishing of Wrong. And he that has no Power to act judicially in either of these Particulars, may be serviceable in both by Evidence and Information, the want whereof sometimes occasions an unjust Sentence, if it be not the Obstruction of Justice it self.

But still it is objected, that Matters of Religion lie not before
Moses

Moses, they seem to be of Ecclesiastical Cognizance, and not to concern the Civil Magistrate. But it appears plainly from the Sacred Records, that the Ecclesiastick Body act only in Subordination to the Civil; and though *Moses* and *Aaron* acted in Conjunction for the Reformation of *Manners*, and after them *Joshua* and *Eleazar*, then *Othniel* and *Phinneas*, the Prince of the People, and the Priest of the Lord, yet it was with difference and Subordination of the latter. As for *Phinehas* his executing Judgment upon *Zimri* and *Cozbi*, it was either an extraordinary Case, and no President to be made of it; or else you must consider him as Head and Prince of his Tribe: And I suppose the *Patriarchal Government* was not then dissolved. But methinks this Matter is clear'd by the last Clause of the Verse. *All the Sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him, i. e. Moses.*

4. *A National Reformation* is not perfected at once, but is the Work of time, and here's a considerable Ground of Hope for the Success.

1st, As *Moses* himself, the Chief Magistrate, first enters the Lists against God's Enemies; so you see, *Regis ad Exemplum*, &c. in Conformity with his Example. Here's one whole Tribe gathered together unto him. Acts of Sin may quickly be broken off, but Habits are not so easily parted with. *Moses* here pursuing the Sin as soon as it was committed, found less difficulty to reform it, than if it had been riveted by a repeated Practice: and here the Tribe of *Levi* assisted in the Work of *Reformation*. At another time it was the Complaint, that from the Prophets, Iniquity was gone forth into all the Land. That Complaint is now revers'd, and the *Sons of Levi* are foremost and next unto *Moses* himself, which is the

2^d thing. I said before, that our Tribe is consecrated to this Service. We are to oppose the *Water-floods of Ungodliness*, lest like a general Deluge they overflow the World; and we are to vindicate God's Honour and Glory from Idols, whoever sets them up. If the Prince, like *Jeroboam*, bids *kiss the Calves* and spare not, *Hos. 13. 2.* yet *Ahijah* must do the Message that God sends by him, *1 Kings, 14. 15.* That *Israel shall be as a Reed in the Water*; that is, at the Devotion of every Wave, and every Wind, without Steadiness. But when they have a Religious Prince to deal with, they have a more easie and more acceptable Work to discharge, they walk not among Thorns and Briars, their Work is neither uncomfortable to themselves, nor unprofitable to others.

And since this happy Advantage is now before us, I heartily wish,

my Reverend Brethren, the Parochial Clergy would not lose the Opportunity, but joyn their Hands in the Work whilst the Government calls upon them, and encourageth them in it.

3. The preserving one Tribe free from Infection, is keeping Possession against the Devil, and hinders the Apostacy from being Universal. God has still a Remnant left to support his Cause against the Workers of Iniquity. 'Tis true Religion as well as other things has its Ebbs and Flows, sometimes it has free Course into all the Corners of the World, and sometimes its Progress is stop'd; sometimes the Candle shines clearly, and sometimes it is almost reduced to a Snuff; and you would conclude, that it must, without Remedy, perish, but that the Everlasting Arm supports it, and Christ hath promised his Church, that the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against it.

4. If

4. If the Sons of *Levi* be gathered together unto *Moses*, it is to be hoped, that by their Labour and Diligence, the rest of the Tribes of *Israel* will in due time be gathered; and the rather, because they are the proper Persons that work together with God in the Harvest of the World's Conversion. Let then this Complaint never lye against us, that we do the Work of the Lord negligently, or deceitfully; remembering that the Flock of Christ committed to our Care will be required at our Hands.

5. And now to put a Period to this Discourse, give me Patience while I only offer a few things by way of Improvement.

1. The Necessity of a *Reformation* will, I hope, justifie the Undertaking of it in all such Persons as act with Submission to the Laws and Government. And when all

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Orders of Men have been required by Authority, to put the Laws in Execution against the Offenders, he makes himself of their Number who neglects such means as are in his Power to suppress them. He that doth not hinder Sin when he may, commands it. He that doth not crush the Cocatrice in the Egg, bids it be mischievous and destroy, Therefore if we must stand answerable for the Sins of others, as well as our own, which we did not hinder when it lay in our Power, then there lies a two-fold Necessity upon us ;

1. To reform our selves, and see that none miscarry by our scandalous Example.

2. To reform others, and see that none miscarry for want of our Advice and Instruction.

For

for Reformation of MANNERS. 55

For if it lay in our way to do it, it will be left upon our Account to answer it, and if others perish by our default, that will be a default by which we shall one Day perish. But as I said before, we meet with some that disparage our Persons, so we shall find some that discourage our Work. And that is,

2dly, To be considered. There are those that raise Mountains of Difficulty for us to remove before we can pretend to success. There is in some Persons an Ignorance, and want of Apprehension of their Duty and Danger. Others have continued long in the Practice of Sin, and are past all Tenderness and Regret. *They are past feeling, and have given up themselves to work all Uncleanneſs even with Greedineſs, Eph. 4. 19.* And others have their Hearts so desperately hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin, that they cry out, *there is no hope, but we will*

follow our own Devices, Jer. 18. 12. Now who can undertake to reform Persons under those Circumstances? Who can instruct the wilfully Ignorant? Who can white the *Æthiopians* Skin, or reclaim an habituate Sinner? and then Desperation is the most incurable Distemper of the Soul. A *Cain*, a *Judas*, or a *Spira*, may languish under it, but it's hard to ascend from that Bottomless Gulph. What Pains and Labour must it cost, first to rescue Men from the Power of their Sins, and then to bring them back to God? *Monica*, the Mother of St. *Austin*, said, she travailed twice for the Birth of her Children, and the last Pangs were worse than the first. She was not so much concern'd for their Generation, as for their Regeneration; not so much for bringing them into the World, as bringing them back to God. But notwithstanding the difficulty, the Work must be done, it's God's Work, and
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he will neither fail to assist nor reward the Undertaker.

3. Those that obstruct the Progress of this Work by their resolved Impiety, will find it a terrible thing to fall into the Hands of an angry God. *The Wrath of Man shall praise him, the remainder of Wrath shall be restrain.* when *Herod* heard from his Flatterers, 'Tis the Voice of a God and not of a Man, the Angel of the Lord smote him, and he was eaten up of Worms; and under his Affliction forced to render unto God the Glory due to his great Name. And proud *Senacherib*, that implacable Persecutor of God's People, did at last preach by his Statue, *let him that sees me learn to serve God better.* And proud *Pharaoh* when the Lord's Hand was against him, was forced to acknowledge him; but such Confessions extorted by the Rack will scarce pass for parts of Sincere Repentance. This therefore is the

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4th and last thing that I shall recommend, and I desire all such Persons as take it ill to be interrupted in their wicked Courses, That they would speedily break off their Sins by Repentance; because the obtaining of Heaven's Happiness is like the buying of the *Sibyl's* Prophecies, the longer we stand in debate of the price, the dearer every Day grows the Purchase. It will cost more Tears, more Sorrow, more Prayers, more sharp Combates of Spiritual Conflicts, more painful Throws of the New-Birth, and more strict Watchfulness of an after Obedience. Whereas the Task would be more easie, and Terms more tolerable, if Men would quickly set about it, and the Success answerable, if they were hearty in it. This then is every Man's indispensable Duty; and no Man has reason to be angry with his Friend or his Neighbour that admonisheth him of it, or causeth him to be punished if

if he neglect such Admonition. The Honour of God, the Credit of Religion, and the Welfare of our precious Souls are all at stake. The Peace and Quiet of our Consciences, yea, the Success of our Worldly Concerns and Interests depend all upon our Management of this Point, and it must therefore be so much the more seasonable both in me to press it, and you to regard it: *For now the Ax seems laid unto the Root of the Tree, and if it bring not forth good Fruit, who knows how soon it may be cut down and cast into the Fire*



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